

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8321

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINR, SCUL, SP

SUBJ: CURRENT UNIVERSITY DISORDERS

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. UNIVERSITY SITUATION, IN WHICH MANY MINOR DISORDERS AND INCIDENTS HAD BEEN OCCURRING DURING RECENT MONTHS, HAS BROKEN OUT IN SIGNIFICANT STUDENT DISORDERS AND VARIOUS CAMPUS BATTLES WITH POLICE IN DIFFERENT UNIVERSITIES, IN WAKE OF MARCH 2 EXECUTION OF ANARCHIST PUIG ANTICH. END SUMMARY.

2. COMMENCING MARCH 4, SIMULTANEOUS STUDENT DISORDERS ERUPTED ON VARIOUS UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES THROUGHOUT SPAIN. PATTERN DURING LAST THREE DAYS HAS BEEN ONE OF STUDENT STRIKES, ASSEMBLIES, AND DEMONSTRATIONS, WHICH HAVE BEEN PROMPTLY BROKEN UP BY POLICE, SOMETIMES IN BATTLES INVOLVING THE USE OF MOUNTED RIOT POLICE, HELICOPTERS, AND THE OCCASIONAL FIRING OF WARNING SHOTS. THESE DISORDERS HAVE LED TO THE OFFICIAL CLOSING OF VARIOUS FACULTIES ON DIFFERENT CAMPUSES BY THE AUTHORITIES.

3. MOST SERIOUS DISORDERS APPEAR TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE AT UNIVERSITIES OF MADRID AND ZARAGOZA, WHILE OTHER LESSER DISORDERS HAVE OCCURRED AT

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UNIVERSITIES IN BARCELONA, BILBAO, SALAMANCA, AND VALENCIA. TODAY

TWO MOLOTOV COCKTAILS THROWN BY UNIDENTIFIED HOODED PERSONS BELIEVED TO BELONG TO EXTREMIST RIGHT-WING GROUPS, STARTED A FIRE AT MADRID'S POLITICAL SCIENCE FACULTY AND BURNED VARIOUS FILES BEFORE BEING PUT OUT.

4. CATALYST FOR CURRENT STUDENT DISORDERS WAS EXECUTION OF CONVICTED ANARCHIST SALVADOR PUIG ANTICH AND OF POLISH SEAMAN HEINZ CHEZ ON MARCH 2, FOLLOWING CIRCULATION OF FLYERS AT UNIVERSITIES DURING RECENT WEEKS CALLING FOR DEMONSTRATIONS AND STUDENT STRIKES IF PUIG ANTICH WERE EXECUTED AND AMID CALLS FOR ABOLITION OF DEATH PENALTY.

5. ALSO UNDERLYING STUDENT PROTESTS AND DISORDERS ARE VARIOUS OTHER MOTIVES, MANY OF A PROFESSIONAL NATURE, SUCH AS (1) THE CHAOTIC CURRICULUM AND TEACHING SITUATIONS ON MOST CAMPUSES, WHERE STUDY PLANS HAVE OFTEN NOT BEEN DRAWN UP, TEACHERS FREQUENTLY WORK WITHOUT CONTRACTS, AND WHERE THE 1970 EDUCATIONAL REFORM LAW LIES LARGELY UNIMPLEMENTED AND HAS LEFT CONFUSION IN ITS WAKE: (2) THE CONFUSED START TO THE CURRENT ACADEMIC YEAR WHERE A PROGRESSIVE PLAN AMONG CERTAIN CLASSES AND UNIVERSITIES TO START THE SCHOOL YEAR IN JAN INSTEAD OF OCT WAS ADOPTED BY THE PREVIOUS EDUCATION MINISTER, THEN DROPPED IN JAN BY THE NEW MINISTER; AND (3) AN ANNOUNCED PLAN OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT TO INTRODUCE THE PRINCIPLE OF "SELECTIVITY" IN THE ADMISSION OF SPANISH STUDENTS TO UNIVERSITIES, WHICH MANY STUDENTS FEAR WILL BE USED AS MEANS TO PREVENT ACCESS TO THE UNIVERSITIES TO STUDENTS WHOM GOVERNMENT FEELS ARE "POLITICALLY UNDESIRABLE".

6. COMMENT: THE TOUGH MANNER IN WHICH THE POLICE AND SECURITY FORCES ARE DEALING WITH THE CURRENT CAMPUS DISORDERS CAN HARDLY BURNISH THE LIBERAL IMAGE OF NEW EDUCATION MINISTER MARTINEZ ESTERUELAS. ON A BROADER PLANE, THESE STUDENT DISORDERS CAN ONLY HAVE COME AT AN EXTREMELY INOPPORTUNE TIME FOR THE NEW GOVERNMENT, OCCUPIED AS IT IS WITH MAJOR CRISIS IN CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS, WITH THE INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC FUROR PROVOKED BY THE PUIG ANTICH AND CHEZ EXECUTIONS, AND THE RUMORED DISSENSION WITHIN THE CABINET.
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